

too, no great harm was done. And what could surpass the young American scholar who recently presented a novelist of my acquaintance, on her arrival in the United States, with a list of all the words in her last work which would have been spelt differently on his side of the Atlantic?

Clearly, this sort of laborious imbecility, so persistent from age to age, must answer some deep human need; above all, perhaps, the need to avoid thinking. In any case, there is little to be done about it. Where there is learning, there will always be pedants also. Far better that Mr. Pismire and Dr. Emmet should waste their lives—it is, after all, mainly their own affair—than that the leisure of others who know how to use it, should be inspected and curtailed. No great harm results. The two worst features of this side of criticism are, I think, the dragooning of the young in the name of 'Research', whether they are fitted for it by nature or not, to rake together some rubbish to exchange for a rubbishy degree; and, secondly, the tendency of the general public to read books about literature instead of literature itself. For it is always easier to sit down and read the latest biography of Shelley than *Prometheus Unbound*; partly because modern books demand less effort than older ones; partly because great literature is seldom light reading. So that

a Jeremiah might foresee an age which will know everything about our great writers—except their works.

But I am concerned really with criticism in its strictest sense—the expression of judgements or feelings about literature. And here at the very outset there is, indeed, one vital distinction to be made. On the one hand, there are the critics who set out to say what is, they think, absolutely true, and whose work makes no claim to any literary value; on the other, those who say what is, at all events, true for themselves, and may delight us by their